

## CHAPTER 8

### INTRODUCTION TO SECOND CORINTHIANS 8

In this chapter the apostle stirs up the Corinthians, to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, by a variety of arguments, and gives a commendation of Titus and some other brethren, who were appointed messengers to them on that account. He first sets before them the example of the Macedonian churches, who had made a liberal collection for the above persons; which the apostle calls the grace of God, and says it was bestowed on them; and it was not the generosity of one church only, but of many, and so worthy of imitation, ([2 Corinthians 8:1](#)) which generosity of theirs he illustrates by the circumstances and condition they were in, they were not only in great affliction, but in deep poverty; and yet contributed with abundance of joy, and in great liberality, ([2 Corinthians 8:2](#)) yea, this they did not only to the utmost of their power, and according to the best of their abilities; but their will was beyond their power, they had hearts to do more than they were able; and what they did, they did of themselves without being asked and urged to it, ([2 Corinthians 8:3](#)) nay, they even entreated the apostle and his fellow ministers to take the money they had collected, and either send or carry it to the poor saints at Jerusalem, and minister it to them themselves, ([2 Corinthians 8:4](#)) and which was beyond the expectation of the apostle, who knew their case; and yet it was but acting like themselves, who at first gave themselves to the Lord and to the apostles by the will of God, ([2 Corinthians 8:5](#)) and this forwardness and readiness of the Macedonian churches, or the churches themselves put the apostle upon desiring Titus to go to Corinth, and finish the collection he had begun; and which carries in it more arguments than one to excite them to this service; as that this was not only at the request of the apostle, but of the Macedonian churches, that Titus should be desired to go on this business; and besides the thing had been begun, and it would be scandalous not to finish it, ([2 Corinthians 8:6](#)) and next the apostle argues from their abounding in the exercise of other graces, which he enumerates, that they would also in this, ([2 Corinthians 8:7](#)) for to excel in one grace, and not in another, was not to their praise and honour; however, he did not urge them to this in an imperious way, and to show

and exercise his authority; but was moved unto it through the generous example of others, and that there might be a proof of their sincere love and affection to the Lord, and to his people, ([4COR2](#) 2 Corinthians 8:8) but as what he wisely judged would have the greatest weight with them; he proposes to them the example of Christ, and instances in his great love to them; who though was rich became poor for them, that they might be enriched through his poverty, ([4COR2](#) 2 Corinthians 8:9) and therefore should freely contribute to his poor saints. Moreover, inasmuch as the apostle did not take upon him to command, only give advice, he should be regarded; and that the rather because what he advised to was expedient for them, would be for their good, and be profitable to them; as well as prevent reproach and scandal, which would follow should they not finish what they had begun so long ago, ([4COR2](#) 2 Corinthians 8:10) wherefore he exhorts them cheerfully to perform what they had shown a readiness to; and points out unto them the rule and measure of it, that it should be out of their own, what they were possessed of, and according to their ability; which be it more or less would be acceptable to God, ([4COR1](#) 2 Corinthians 8:11,12) for his meaning was not that some should be eased and others burdened; but that all should communicate according to what they had, ([4COR3](#) 2 Corinthians 8:13) to which he stimulates them from the hope of the recompence of reward, whenever it should be otherwise with them than it was, and things should change both with them who communicated, and with them to whom they communicated; or this was the end proposed by the apostle, that in the issue there might be an equality between them, ([4COR4](#) 2 Corinthians 8:14) which he confirms and illustrates by the distribution of the manna to the Israelites, who had an equal measure, ([4COR5](#) 2 Corinthians 8:15) as appears from what is said, ([EXOD16](#) Exodus 16:18) next the apostle enters upon a commendation of the messengers, that were appointed and ordered to be sent to them upon this errand, and begins with Titus; and gives thanks to God, that had put it into his heart to be so solicitous about this matter, ([4COR6](#) 2 Corinthians 8:16) and praises him for his forwardness in undertaking it of his own accord, and in performing it without being urged to it, ([4COR7](#) 2 Corinthians 8:17) and next he commends another person, whose name is not mentioned, who was sent along with him; a person of note and fame in all the churches, ([4COR8](#) 2 Corinthians 8:18) and who had the honour to be chosen by the churches for this service, ([4COR9](#) 2 Corinthians 8:19) and the reason why more persons than one were sent, was to prevent any suspicion of converting the collections to wrong purposes; and to preserve and secure a good character, a character of honesty before God and men, ([4COR10](#) 2

Corinthians 8:20,21). To these two a third was added, whose name also is not mentioned, and who had been proved to be a diligent man, and appeared more so in this matter upon the apostle's confidence in the Corinthians, that they would readily attend to the service these were sent to promote, (~~4002~~2 Corinthians 8:22) and thus having separately given the characters of these men, they are all of them commended again; Titus, as the apostle's partner and fellow helper; and the other brethren as the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ, (~~4003~~2 Corinthians 8:23) and the chapter is concluded with an exhortation to the members of the church at Corinth, to give these messengers a proof of their love to the poor saints before all the churches, and make it appear that he had not boasted of them in vain, (~~4004~~2 Corinthians 8:24).

**Ver. 1.** *Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God,* etc..] The apostle having said everything that was proper to conciliate the minds and affections of the Corinthians to him, and the matter in difference being adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties concerned; he proposes what he had wisely postponed till all was over, the making a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem; which he enforces by the example of the Macedonian churches, the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, etc.. He addresses them in a kind and tender manner, under the endearing appellation of “brethren”, being so in a spiritual relation; and takes the liberty to inform them of the goodness of God to some of their sister churches; “we do you to wit”, or “we make known unto you”. The phrase “to wit” is an old English one, and almost obsolete, and signifies to acquaint with, inform of, make known, or give knowledge of anything. The thing informed of here, “is the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia”; by which is meant, not any of the blessings of grace common to all the saints, such as regeneration, justification, adoption, forgiveness of sin, and the like; but beneficence, liberality, or a liberal disposition to do good to others, called “the grace of God”; because it sprung from thence, as all good works do when performed aright; they were assisted in it by the grace of God; and it was the love and favour of God in Christ, which was the engaging motive, the leading view, which drew them on to it. This was

*bestowed* upon them, not merited, it was grace and free grace; God may give persons ever so much of this world's goods, yet if he does not give them a spirit of generosity, a liberal disposition, they will make no use of it for the good of others: and this was bestowed

*on the churches of Macedonia*; not on a few leading men among them, but upon all the members of these churches in general; and not upon one church, but upon many; a spirit of liberality was in general diffused among them, and this is proposed for imitation. Examples have great influence, and the examples of many the greater; too many follow a multitude to do evil; here the example of many, even of many churches, is proposed in order to be followed to do good, to exercise acts of beneficence and goodness, in a free generous way to saints in distress; which as it is here called, “the grace of God”, so in some following verses, “the gift, the same grace, and this grace”, (~~4004~~ 2 Corinthians 8:4,6,7) agreeably to the Hebrew word **dsj**, which signifies “grace” and “free bounty”; and is used for doing good, or for beneficence, which the Jews call **pydsj twl ymg** “a performance of kind and bountiful actions”: which are done freely, and for which a person expects no return from the person to whom he does them: and this they distinguish from **j qdx**, “alms”, after this manner<sup>f67</sup>;

“an alms (they say) is exercised towards the living, beneficence towards the living and the dead; alms is used to the poor, beneficence both to the rich and poor; alms is performed by a man's substance, beneficence both by body and substance.”

**Ver. 2.** *How that in a great trial of affliction*, etc.] The apostle proceeds to show the condition these churches were in when, and the manner in which, they contributed to the relief of others. They were in affliction: they received the Gospel at first in much affliction, as did the church at Thessalonica, which was one of them; and afterwards suffered much from their countrymen for the profession of it, by reproaches, persecutions, imprisonments, confiscation of goods, etc.. They were under trying afflictions, which tried their faith and patience, and in many of them. Now for persons in prosperity, when all things go well with them, to be liberal is no such great matter; but for persons in adversity, under trying dispensations of Providence, amidst many afflictive ones to communicate generously to the relief of others, is something very remarkable, and worthy of notice and imitation, which was the case of these churches: for notwithstanding this,

*the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality*; so that it appears likewise that they were not only in great afflictions, but in deep poverty; had but an handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, their purses almost empty, and their

coffers almost exhausted; they had gotten to the bottom of their substance, had but very little left; and yet freely gave, with joy, even with an abundance of it. The allusion seems to be to the words of David, in (~~1324~~1 Chronicles 22:14) now behold, *γυν*[ *b* which the Septuagint render by *κατα πτωχειαν μου*, “according to my poverty, I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold”, etc.. for by “the abundance of their joy”, is not so much meant the joy they felt in the midst of their afflictions, so that they could glory in them, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, as the cheerfulness of their spirits in contributing to the necessities of others; glad at heart they were that they had hearts to do good, and an opportunity of doing it; which they gladly laid hold on, observing the divine rule, “he that sheweth mercy”, let him do it “with cheerfulness”: and this they did, considering the small pittance they were possessed of, very largely; for though their poverty was deep, and their purses low, their hearts were large and full, and their hands ready to communicate; so that their poverty “abounded to the riches of their liberality”: though their poverty was great, their liberality was rich and large; though it might be but little they gave in quantity, it was much in quality, much in liberality; like the poor widow, who, of her want and penury, cast in more than all the rich besides, not in quantity, but in liberality; they only giving some, and a disproportionate part, she her all.

**Ver. 3.** *For to [their] power, I bear record*, etc..] They gave according to their ability, to the utmost of it, which is the most that can be desired, or be given; for no man can give more than he has, nor is he required to do more than he is able:

*yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves*; not that they did or could do beyond their power; but they were “willing” beyond their power; their hearts were larger than their purses; they would gladly have done more than they had ability to do; and to this the apostle bears testimony to give it credit, which otherwise might have been called in question: and it is to be observed, that these churches communicated in this cheerful manner and large way, considering their circumstances, to the utmost of their ability, “of themselves”; unasked, not having been put upon, pressed, and urged to such a service; for persons to give when they are asked, especially when they do it readily, at once, without demurring upon it, and with cheerfulness, is much; but to give unasked discovers a very generous and beneficent disposition: this is reckoned by the Jews as one of the excellencies in giving of alms <sup>f68</sup>,

“when a man gives into the hands of another *ἰατρυχ μδωq*, “before he asks”; and the next degree to this is, when he gives to him after he asks; and the next to this, who gives less than is proper, but with a cheerful countenance.”

**Ver. 4.** *Praying us with much entreaty*, etc..] They not only gave freely, being unasked by the apostles; but they sought to them, and earnestly entreated them,

*that they would receive the gift*; the beneficence, what they had so freely and generously collected: and

*the fellowship of the ministering to the saints*; what they had communicated for the service of the poor saints at Jerusalem, in which they testified their having and holding fellowship with the churches of Christ; and that they would receive it at their hands, and take it upon them, and carry it to Jerusalem, and distribute to the poor saints there, as should seem to them most proper and convenient; which they accordingly agreed to; (see ~~465~~Romans 15:25,26).

**Ver. 5.** *And this they did not as we hoped*, etc..] All this was unexpected by the apostles, who knew their great affliction and deep poverty, and therefore could not have hoped for such a collection from them; or that they would have desired the apostle to have ministered it for them:

*but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God*; the sense of which is not barely, or only, that they committed themselves to the care of Providence in all their afflictions and poverty, trusting in God that he would provide for them for time to come, and therefore even in their strait circumstances gave liberally; and were so much under the direction of the apostles, God so disposing their minds, that they were willing to do or give anything that they should say was proper; yea, were very willing that some of their number should leave their habitations and families to accompany them, in forwarding this good work elsewhere: but the apostle seems to have respect to what these persons did at first conversion, when they gave themselves to Christ, to be saved by him, and him alone; and to serve him to the uttermost, in everything, he should signify to be his will; and when they joined themselves to the churches of Christ, and put themselves under the care, government, and direction of the apostles, who were over the churches in the Lord: and therefore though what the members of these churches collected, was very wonderful and

beyond expectation; yet when it is considered that these persons had long ago given their whole selves, their all to Christ, had committed all into his hands, and devoted themselves entirely to his service; and had declared their subjection to his ministers as servants under him, and to his word and ordinances as ministered by them; it need not be so much wondered at, that they should be so liberal in giving away their worldly substance for the relief of Christ's poor members, when they had given their precious souls, their immortal all, and had committed the salvation of them entirely to him. Giving themselves to Christ, in this sense, supposes that they had a true sight and apprehension of their state and condition by nature, how sinful they were, and lost and undone in themselves; that they were destitute of a righteousness, and unable to obtain one by the works of the law; that they were in hopeless and helpless circumstances, as considered in themselves; that they were diseased from head to foot, and could not cure themselves; that they were dead in law, and liable to the curse and condemnation of it; for till men see themselves in such a case they will never give themselves to Christ, or betake themselves to him to be saved by him. Moreover, this supposes some knowledge of him as God's ordinance for salvation, as the Saviour of the Father's appointing and sending; of him, as having effected it by his obedience and death; of his being the only Saviour, a suitable one, both able and willing to save to the uttermost, even the chief of sinners that come to God by him. It is expressive of faith in Christ; of seeing the Son and the fulness of grace and salvation in him, and of going to him for it; of staying, resting, leaning, and relying upon him, venturing on him, committing all into his hands, and trusting him with all and for all. It denotes subjection to him, as their husband, to whom they give themselves as his spouse and bride, and consent to be the Lord's in a conjugal relation; and submission to him in all his offices, as a prophet to be taught and instructed by him, as a priest to be washed in his blood, and justified by his righteousness, to which they heartily submit, and as their Lord and King to the sceptre of his kingdom, the laws of his house, and ordinances of his Gospel; for they are made a willing people, not only to be saved by him, but to serve him in body and soul, and with all they have; as it is but right they should, since he has given himself, his all, for them. Giving themselves up to the apostles, signifies not a surrender of themselves to them as lords over God's heritage, to be governed and ruled over in a tyrannical and arbitrary way; but a submitting of themselves to them, as Christ's servants set over them in the Lord, whilst they minister the word and administer the ordinances, according to the will of Christ; owning them as their fathers, or

instructors, and guides, and as watchmen and overseers placed in and over the churches, for their spiritual welfare: all which is,

*by the will of God:* as that poor sensible sinners should give up themselves to Christ, to be saved by him, and serve him; and that they should join themselves to the churches, and be subject to the care, teachings, and government of his servants in his house.

**Ver. 6.** *Insomuch that we desired Titus,* etc..] Observing the very great readiness, cheerfulness, and liberality of the poor Macedonians in this matter, the apostles could do no other than desire Titus to forward, hasten, and accomplish a like liberal contribution among the Corinthians; or the sense is, that the Macedonians not only prayed with much entreaty, as in (~~4~~2 Corinthians 8:4) that the apostle would be pleased to take their collection, and send or carry it to Jerusalem; but also that they would entreat Titus,

*that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also;* that is, that as he had already moved this affair to the Corinthians while he was with them, and had made some progress in it, though what, through one thing or another, it had been retarded, and lay in some measure neglected; that he might be desired to go again, on purpose to complete so good a work, so acceptable to God, and so useful to the poor saints; which carries in it a new and strong argument to stir up the Corinthians to this service; since they had not only the example of the Macedonian churches, but it was even at their request that Titus was desired to go upon this errand; and to this sense read the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

**Ver. 7.** *Therefore as ye abound in everything,* etc..] In all gifts and every grace, in the use and exercise of them, insomuch that they were enriched in everything, and wanted nothing; (see ~~4~~1 Corinthians 1:5-7), that is here expressed in general, is explained by particulars following:

*in faith:* both in the doctrine of faith, which they had received and professed, held fast to, and abode by; yea, they abounded in the knowledge of it, zeal for it, and thankfulness to God on account of it; and in the grace of faith, not an historical one, nor the faith of miracles, but that which is peculiar to God's elect, is the gift of his grace and the work of his Spirit, which has Christ for its object, and works by love; in this they abounded,

inasmuch as they had a large measure of it, grew in it, were full of it, and were much in the exercise thereof:

*in utterance*, or “speech”: meaning either the gift of speaking with tongues, which many in this church had; or the gift; of understanding and explaining the word of God with much freedom; or a liberty of mind and speech to declare their faith in Christ, and make an ingenuous confession of it to others:

*in knowledge*; of God and of Christ, and of the truths of the Gospel:

*and in all diligence*: their ministers were diligent in preaching the Gospel, the people in hearing the word, and attending on ordinances, and both studiously careful to keep up the discipline of the church; and very industrious to discharge the several duties of religion, and to assist one another, both in things temporal and spiritual:

*and in your love to us*: the apostles and ministers of the word, whom they loved, esteemed, and honoured for their works' sake: and since they were so eminent for these graces, and the exercise of them, the apostle exhorts them to liberality to the poor saints;

*see that ye abound in this grace also*; for as faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love to Christ's ministers are graces; so also is kindness shown to Christ's poor members, it is a gift of God's grace, cannot be rightly exercised without the assistance of his grace, has for its objects men who have received the grace of God, and will be rewarded with a reward of grace; persons eminent for the several graces of the Spirit of God, and the exercise of them, it may be not only desired, but expected from them, that they should abound in the exercise of beneficence to the poor. This is another argument exciting to that good work.

**Ver. 8.** *I speak not by commandment*, etc..] Either of God, who has not fixed the certain times when, or certain sums which persons are to give, and other circumstances, which are left to discretion; but in general has signified it as his will, that those in necessity are to be relieved by such who are in ability to do it: or as an apostle, he did not speak in an imperious manner, extorting from them a collection, or laying his apostolical injunctions upon them to make one; he did not go about to force or oblige them to it, for men in such cases must act willingly, and what they do, must do of their own accord with cheerfulness, and not through constraint or grudgingly:

*but by occasion of the forwardness of others*; or “through carefulness for others”; what moved the apostle to propose this matter to the Corinthians, and exhort them to it, were either the forwardness of the Macedonians, cheerfully contributing in the midst of their poverty, and their urgent solicitations that the same good work might go on elsewhere, or else the very great care and concern that he himself had for the poor saints at Jerusalem: it was not therefore to show his apostolical authority, that he sent Titus to them to finish this service; but he was stirred up hereunto, partly by the bounty and solicitations of others, and partly by bowels of compassion within himself, and concern in his own mind for the poor saints; and also, as he adds,

*to prove the sincerity of your love*; to God, to Christ, to his ministers, and to the saints, particularly the poor; that their love might appear to be true, genuine, hearty, and real to others, to all men as well as to them the apostles.

**Ver. 9.** *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus*, etc..] This is a new argument, and a very forcible one to engage to liberality, taken from the wonderful grace and love of Christ, displayed in his state of humiliation towards his people; which is well known to all them that have truly believed in Christ; of this they are not and cannot be ignorant, his love, good will, and favour are so manifest; there are such glaring proofs of it in his incarnation, sufferings, and death, that leave no room for any to doubt of it:

*that though he was rich*; in the perfections of his divine nature, having the fulness of the Godhead in him, all that the Father has, and so equal to him; such as eternity, immutability, infinity and immensity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, etc.. in the works of his hands, which reach to everything that is made, the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them are, things visible and invisible; in his universal empire and dominion over all creature; and in those large revenues of glory, which are due to him from them all; which riches of his are underived from another, incommunicable to another, and cannot be lost:

*yet for your sakes he became poor*; by assuming human nature, with all its weaknesses and imperfections excepting sin; he appeared in it not as a lord, but in the form of a servant; he endured in it a great deal of reproach and shame, and at last death itself; not that by becoming man he ceased to be God, or lost his divine perfections, thought these were much hid and

covered from the view of man; and in his human nature he became the reverse of what he is in his divine nature, namely, finite and circumscribable, weak and infirm, ignorant of some things, and mortal; in which nature also he was exposed to much meanness and outward poverty; he was born of poor parents, had no liberal education, was brought up to a trade, had not where to lay his head, was ministered to by others of their substance, and had nothing to bequeath his mother at his death, but commits her to the care of one of his disciples; all which fulfilled the prophecies of him, that he should be **l d** and **yn** [“poor” and “low”, (<sup><3900></sup>Psalm 41:1, <sup><3909></sup>Zechariah 9:9)]. The persons for whom he became so, were not the angels, but elect men; who were sinners and ungodly persons, and were thereby become bankrupts and beggars: the end for which he became poor for them was,

*that they through his poverty might be rich*; not in temporals, but in spirituals; and by his obedience, sufferings, and death in his low estate, he has paid all their debts, wrought out a robe of righteousness, rich and adorned with jewels, with which he clothes them, and through his blood and sacrifice has made them kings and priests unto God. They are enriched by him with the graces of his Spirit; with the truths of the Gospel, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; with himself and all that he has; with the riches of grace here, and of glory hereafter. These are communicable from him, though unsearchable, and are solid and substantial, satisfying, lasting, and for ever. Now if this grace of Christ will not engage to liberality with cheerfulness, nothing will.

**Ver. 10.** *And herein I give my advice*, etc..] As Daniel did to Nebuchadnezzar, (<sup><2047></sup>Daniel 4:27). The apostle did not choose to make use of his apostolical authority, or give orders, as he sometimes did in such cases; he did not think fit to speak by way of commandment, obliging them to what they ought to do willingly; looking upon this the most prudential step, and wisest method he could take in order to succeed, only to give his judgment in this matter, as what would be best for them, and most conducive to their real good:

*for this is expedient for you*; most versions read it, “profitable”; doing acts of beneficence is profitable to persons, as to things temporal, God usually blessing such with a greater affluence of the things of life, and which indeed is often promised; and is also profitable with respect to things spiritual, for if God does not make it up to them in temporal enjoyments,

yet with his presence, the discoveries of his love, the joys of his salvation, and an increase of every grace; so Gaius, that hospitable man to the apostle, and all Christian strangers, was in much spiritual health, and a prosperous condition in his soul, when but in an ill state with respect to his body: yea, such a conduct is profitable in relation to things eternal; for as it springs from the grace of God, and men are assisted therein by it, and is exercised towards persons that have received it, it will be rewarded with a reward of grace; though it may be, the apostle here does not so much argue from the utility, as the decency of it in the Corinthians;

*who*, says he,

*have began before, a year ago, not only to do, but also to be forward*, or “willing”: it is hard to say whether the apostle designs to commend or reprove them; and indeed, it seems as if there was a mixture of praise and dispraise in this passage; it was in their favour that they had begun before, even a year ago, and were willing and forward of themselves to this good work; yea, were the first that set it on foot, and so were an example to the Macedonian churches, and others; but then this was against them, that the other churches, which began later than they, had finished before them; whether this their charity was obstructed, as some have thought, through some affliction and persecution that befell them, which if it appeared would much excuse them; or rather it was neglected through lukewarmness and indolence; wherefore the apostle gives his sentiments, that to save their own credit, it was expedient for them to finish what they had begun; for otherwise, as their boasting of them would be in vain, so they would expose themselves to contempt and incur disgrace; and it was not only proper that they should do this, but do it willingly, and with much cheerfulness, for that is meant by being “forward” or “willing”; that they not only do it, but do it with a good will, which they at first discovered.

**Ver. 11.** *Now therefore perform the doing of it*, etc..] This is a conclusion from the former advice, to finish what was readily willed; for as it is not enough to do a thing, unless it is done cheerfully and willingly, so it is not sufficient to express a good will to such service as is here called to, without doing it; both should go together:

*that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also*; in some cases there is neither power nor will to do good; in others there is will, when there is not a power; but in this case of beneficence to the poor saints, as there was a willingness declared, there was an ability in the

Corinthians to perform; they had it in the power of their hands, more or less, to act: and the apostle in the last clause of this verse points out the rule and measure of their liberality,

*out of that which you have*; according to your abilities, and as God has prospered you; and with which he shuts up the mouths of all objectors, rich and poor: should the rich say, would you have us give away all we have? the answer is, no; but “out of that which you have”, something of it, according as you are able; should the poorer sort say, we are in mean circumstances, we have families to provide for, and can spare little, and what we can do is so trifling, that it is not worth giving or accepting; the reply is, give “out of that which you have”, be it less or more; it follows,

**Ver. 12.** *For if there be first a willing mind*, etc..] If what is done springs from a truly noble, generous spirit, a spirit of bountifulness and liberality; and is given cheerfully and freely, and according to a man's ability; the quantity matters not, whether it be more or less:

*it is accepted*; both of God and man:

*according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*. The widow's mite was as acceptable, and more so, than all the rich men cast into the treasury; a cup of cold water given to a prophet, in the name of a prophet, is taken notice of by God, and shall have its reward. The present sent by the Philippians to the Apostle Paul, and which perhaps was not very large, was “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God”, (<sup>3008</sup>Philippians 4:18).

**Ver. 13.** *For I mean not that other men be eased and you burdened*.] Referring either to the givers; and that either to the richer and meaner sort in this church; the apostle's sense being, not to put the whole burden of the collection upon some only, whilst others were excused doing little or nothing; but that everyone should give according to his ability; or to other churches in poorer circumstances; and the apostle's meaning was, not that these churches by reason of their meanness should be entirely free from this service, as it was plain they were not, by the instance of the Macedonians; and that the whole be devolved upon the Corinthian church, and others that were rich; but that all should contribute according to their circumstances: or this may refer to the persons given to, and for whom this beneficence was asked; for the words may be rendered, “for not that there may be ease”, or relaxation “to others, and to you affliction” or straitness; that is,

his meaning was, not that there should be such a contribution raised for these poor saints at Jerusalem, that they should live in ease and great abundance; whilst their benefactors, through an over abundant generosity to them, were straitened, and their families reduced to great difficulties; this was what was far from his intentions.

**Ver. 14.** *But by an equality*, etc..] All that he meant was, that there might be an equality both in givers and receivers, proportioned to their several circumstances and stations of life:

*that now at this time*; which was a very necessitous time at Jerusalem, there being a famine there, and their common stock exhausted:

*your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want*; which respects either the different abilities of givers at different times; and that whereas now the church at Corinth was rich, and wealthy, and had great abundance of the things of this world, they in this general collection were able to make up the deficiencies of other churches; and so should it ever be their case, as it might be, that they should be reduced, and these other churches increased, and enjoy a large abundance, they might hereafter in their turn supply what would be wanting in them: or else the persons given to; and the sense is, that should they ever change circumstances, as it was not impossible that they that were now rich should become poor, and they that were poor become rich; then as their abundance had been a supply to the wants of others, the abundance of others in their turn would be a supply to their wants; so that the argument is taken from the hope of retribution, in case of such vicissitudes; (see <sup><sup>4168</sup></sup>Luke 6:38) his view was,

*that there may be equality*; either that in time to come an equal return may be made, should it be necessary; or that at present some sort of equality might be observed between the rich and poor; that the rich should so distribute as not to leave themselves without a proper support, according to their station of life; and yet so freely communicate, that the poor may not be without food and raiment, suitable to their lower sphere of life.

**Ver. 15.** *As it is written*, etc..] In (<sup><sup>4168</sup></sup>Exodus 16:18)

*he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack*; respect is had to the history of the manna, a sort of food God prepared for the Israelites in the wilderness; and which were gathered by them every morning, by some more, by others less; and yet when it came to

be measured, every man had his “omer” and no more, one had nothing over, and the other not at all deficient; each man had his proper and equal quantity; and which, by the Jews <sup>f69</sup>, is looked upon as a miracle that was wrought: many useful instructions may be learned from this history, as that as there was a general provision made by God for the Israelites, good and bad, and the mixed multitude that came from Egypt with them; so there is an universal providence of God which reaches to all creatures, even to the vegetable, to the birds of the air, and beasts of the field, to all the individuals of human nature, and to the bad among them as well as the good; though to the latter it is more special, who of all men have the least reason to be distrustful and uneasy: and as that provision was daily, so is that providential supply which all creatures have from God; he is to be trusted to, and depended on daily; application is to be made to him every day for daily bread; nor should there be any anxious concern for the morrow. Moreover, as the Israelites, though the manna was prepared for them, were to rise in the morning and gather it before the sun waxed hot; so notwithstanding the providence of God, and the daily care he takes of men, yet diligence, industry, and the use of means are highly commendable. And as some gathered more and others less, yet upon measuring it with the “omer”, there was an entire equality, one had not more nor less than another; so upon the winding up of things in Providence, such as have gathered much riches in the morning of life, in the evening of death will have nothing over, nor anything to show more than others; and they that have gathered little will appear to have had no lack; both will have had food and raiment, and no more, only with this difference, some will have enjoyed a richer diet and clothing, and others a meaner, and both suitable to their circumstances in life; which may instruct us to depend upon divine Providence, daily to be content with such things as we have, and to make a proper use of what is gathered, whether more or less, and not only for ourselves, but for the good of others. This discovers the egregious folly of such, who are anxiously concerned for the gathering and amassing much worldly riches together; which when they have done, they lay it up for themselves, and do not make use of it for common good, neither for the good of civil society, nor the interest of religion. Let it be observed, that those Israelites who from a selfish covetous disposition, and distrust of divine Providence, left of their manna till the morning, “it bred worms and stank”: which was by the just judgment of God inflicted as a punishment; for otherwise it was capable of being kept longer. So when covetous mortals lay up for themselves for time to come, and do not communicate to

the necessities of others, such a practice breeds and produces worms, moth, and rottenness in their estates, which gradually decrease, or are suddenly taken from them, or they from them: such an evil disposition is the root and cause of many immoralities in life; it greatly prejudices professors of religion in things spiritual; and it tends to their everlasting ruin, to breed that worm of an evil conscience that will never die, and to render their persons stinking and abominable, both in the sight of God and men.

**Ver. 16.** *But thanks be to God*, etc..] The apostle proceeds to give an account of the persons and their characters, who were employed in making this collection at Corinth for the poor saints, and begins with Titus; and the rather because he had been already concerned in setting afoot that good work among them; and gives thanks to God,

*which*, says he,

*put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you*, by “earnest care” is meant that very great carefulness, solicitude, and diligence, Titus had shown in stirring them up to a liberal contribution; and which was the same that he had expressed in the arguments just now used by him, to engage them in the same service; and this care, as it was a very earnest and hearty one, so he suggests that it was more for them, than for the sake of the poor; the performance of acts of beneficence and liberality tending more to the advantage and account of the giver than of the receiver: and he further intimates, that these good motions in the heart of Titus were not merely natural, or the effects of human power and free will, but were of God, as every good thing is; they were wrought in him by the Spirit of God, and sprung from the grace of God, and therefore the apostle returns thanks to God for the same; and the mention of this could not fail of carrying weight with it, and of having some influence on the minds of the Corinthians.

**Ver. 17.** *For indeed, he accepted the exhortation*, etc..] The Macedonians besought the apostle with much entreaty to give unto him, (~~FOR~~2 Corinthians 8:4,6) or which being moved by their example, they gave unto him, namely, that he would go and finish what he had already begun; and accordingly he did not refuse, but readily accepted the exhortation: yea, not only so,

*but being more forward*; than was known or could have been expected; which shows that this was put into his heart by God, before it was moved

unto him; so that if he had never been asked, or exhorted hereunto, he would have gone of himself:

*of his own accord he went unto you*; so great is his care of you; so great his love unto you so willing was he to come again and pay another visit: and especially on this account, where he had before been treated with so much respect and kindness. Titus having been at Corinth already, and being well known there, the apostle forbears saying anything more in his commendation.

**Ver. 18.** *And we have sent with him the brother*, etc..] The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “our brother”; and one of Stephens's copies, “your brother”: who this brother was, is not certain; some think it was Luke the evangelist, the companion of the apostle in his travels:

*whose praise is in the Gospel, throughout all the churches*; being known and highly commended by all the churches, for the Gospel he wrote; but it is not certain that Luke as yet had wrote his Gospel; and much less that it was so much known at present among the churches; and besides, this brother's praise seems to be on account of his preaching the Gospel, and not writing one: others think Barnabas is intended, who was chosen and sent out by the churches along with the apostle; but these in a short time separated from each other, nor do we read of their coming together again: others are of opinion, that Apollos is designed, who was a very eloquent preacher, and of whom the apostle had given the Corinthians an intimation in his former epistle, that he would come to them at a convenient time; but to him is objected, that he never was chosen of the churches, to travel with the apostle on such an account as here mentioned: others would have it that Silas or Silvanus is meant, who was a very constant companion of the apostle, and of whom he makes mention in most of his epistles; and others have made no doubt of it, but John Mark is here meant, who not only wrote a Gospel, but was an excellent preacher of it, and was chosen by the churches to go along with Paul and Barnabas; and though there was some distaste taken to him by Paul, he was afterwards reconciled to him, and for his profitableness in the ministry was greatly desired by him; but after all, it is difficult to determine who it was, nor is it of any great moment: a “brother” he was; being not only a regenerate person, but a preacher of the Gospel; a brother in the ministry, and “one whose praise was in the Gospel”; greatly admired, and much commended, for his excellent talent in

preaching the Gospel; and for this he was famous “throughout all the churches”; a very great commendation indeed; but this is not all, it follows,

**Ver. 19.** *And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches,* etc..]

Not only famous for preaching the Gospel, but he was also appointed by the joint suffrages of the churches, which were made by the lifting up or stretching out of the hand, as the word here used signifies; this brother was not chosen to this service by a few private persons, or by a single church only, but by several churches; which does not refer to the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch, as if the apostles were appointed, and others were appointed by these churches to travel with them, in order to collect money for the poor saints at Jerusalem; of which no mention is any where made, only of their being sent out by them to preach the Gospel. James, Cephas, and John indeed, when they gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they might go to the Heathen, desired them to “remember the poor”; (~~Gal~~ Galatians 2:9,10) but these were not the churches. The church at Antioch did collect for the brethren in Judea, at the time of the famine among them, and sent their bounty by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, which seems to be the case here. This brother was chosen by the churches who collected, and not by the churches in Judea, for whom the collections were made; for it was usual, and what was right and proper, that the churches chose whom they thought fit to carry their liberality to Jerusalem; (see ~~1 Cor~~ 1 Corinthians 16:3,4). Now this brother had the honour to be chosen by these churches,

*to travel,* says the apostle,

*with us, with this grace;* bounty or beneficence of the churches, what they had freely and liberally contributed for the supply of the poor, from a principle of grace, and by the assistance of it;

*which is administered by us;* not given by the apostles, but collected by them; or what was procured by their means, in the several churches to whom they had moved it, and by proper arguments had excited them to it, with which they cheerfully complied: and this was done on a two fold account, both

*to the glory of the same Lord:* Jesus Christ, who is the one Lord over all; the same Lord of the apostles, and the church at Corinth; the same Lord of the Corinthians, and the Macedonian and other churches; and the same

Lord of the poor saints at Jerusalem, and the rich members of the several churches that contributed to them: and also to

*the declaration of your ready mind*; or to stir up their ready mind to increase it and promote it in them, as well to make it manifest, and that it might appear to others, how readily and freely they came into this service; so that the apostle's concern in this administration was not from any sinister and selfish ends; no, nor so much for the relief of the poor, though this was greatly designed, as for the glory of Christ, and the honour of his churches.

**Ver. 20.** *Avoiding this, that no man should blame us*, etc..] There is an allusion in these words to mariners, who, when sensible of danger, steer their course another way, in order to shun a rock and secure themselves. So the apostles being aware of the censorious spirits of some persons, and to prevent all suspicion of their converting any part of what they had collected to their own private use, sent Titus with it, a man of known probity and integrity; and he not by himself only, but another brother with him, one who had obtained a good report as a minister of the Gospel in all the churches: and, besides, was appointed not by the apostles, but by the churches themselves, to this service. This shows the good conduct, and great prudence of the apostle, and his care and solicitude that the ministry be not blamed; he knew he had many enemies, and how subject such are to suspicion and jealousy, when persons are intrusted with much, which was the case here; for it is added,

*in this abundance which is administered by us*: which designs the very large contributions which were made by the churches, through the means of the apostle's moving, exciting, and encouraging them thereunto; and which were committed to their care and trust, and at their entreaty they had accepted of.

**Ver. 21.** *Providing for honest things*, etc..] Or premeditating, forecasting, or considering before hand in the mind, things that are good, that are of good report among men, as well as accounted good by God; for it becomes professors of religion, and especially ministers of the Gospel, to be careful not only to exercise a good conscience towards God; but so to behave, that they may obtain and preserve the good opinion of men; for when they have once lost their credit and reputation among men, their ministry becomes in a great measure useless; wherefore the apostle adds,

*not only in the sight of the Lord:* the same Lord as before, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a diligent searcher of the hearts, and discerner of the thoughts, and observer of the ways and actions of all his people;

*but also in the sight of men;* not that the apostle affected a mere outside show, popular applause, and the praise of men; but was concerned lest any weak persons, by their conduct, should be stumbled and fall, the edification of any should be hindered, and their ministry become unprofitable.

**Ver. 22.** *And we have sent with him our brother,* etc..] This is a third person sent about this business. The apostle, in this, conformed to the customs of his nation; at least if he did not purposely do it, it agrees with the Jewish canons, which require three persons for the distribution of alms.

“The alms dish, (they say <sup>f70</sup>) is by three; nor do they appoint **hçl çm twj p ^ysnrp** “overseers” of it “less than three”.”

Again, they say <sup>f71</sup>,

“the poor's chest is collected by two, **hçl çb tqj j tmw** “but distributed by three”; it is collected by two, because they do not appoint governors over a congregation less than two, and it is distributed by three, even as pecuniary judgments; but the alms dish is collected by three, and distributed by three; for the collection and distribution are alike:”

who this brother was, sent by the apostle with Titus and the other person, is as uncertain as the former. Some think it was Luke, others Apollos, others Timothy, others Sosthenes, others Epaenetus, others Silas, others Zenas the lawyer; a brother he was, and a very considerable character is given of him:

*whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things;* he was a very diligent and industrious man, and so fit for this service; he had been tried and proved, and was found to be so, not only once or twice, but oftentimes; and that not in a few instances, but in many; and in nothing did he ever show more diligence than in this matter:

*but now much more diligent;* than ever he had been in anything before:

*upon the great confidence which I have in you;* what doubled and increased this brother's diligence, and made him so eager for, and forward to this work, was, his observing the great confidence the apostle expressed

of the very great readiness and liberality of the Corinthians; and which tacitly carries in it an argument exciting them thereunto: or this last clause may be read, “which he hath in you”; and so regards the confidence this brother had in them, which made him so ready to engage with, and join the other messengers.

**Ver. 23.** *Whether any do inquire of Titus*, etc..] The apostle here sums up the characters of each of the above persons; as for Titus, he says,

*he is my partner*; he had been his companion in his travels, a partner with him in preaching the Gospel, as well as in the troubles and persecutions he had met with; and was one with whom he had had sweet communion and fellowship:

*and fellow helper*; or worker,

*concerning you*; he had been a joint instrument with him, either in their conversion, or consolation, and correction; or for their edification and instruction, and setting things right, which had been out of order among them:

*or our brethren be inquired of*; if their characters are asked after, as well as Titus's; by whom are meant not his fellow apostles, but the two brethren who were sent along with Titus; what may be truly said of them is,

*they are the messengers of the churches*; they were chosen and sent forth by the churches, not only to preach the Gospel, but particularly to take care of the ministration to the poor saints. They were messengers appointed by the churches for this service, and were also appointed to the service of the churches; respect seems to be had to the public minister in the synagogues, who was called *rwbx j yl ç*, “the messenger of the congregation”, or “church”<sup>f72</sup>; whose business was to take care about the reading of the law and the prophets, to pray in public, and also to preach if there was no other; so we read<sup>f73</sup> also of *^yd tyb yj wl ç*, “the messengers of the sanhedrim”; who were sent at the proper time to reap the sheaf of the first fruits, and of others who swore the high priest before the day of atonement<sup>f74</sup>; and of *hwxm yj wl ç*, “the messengers of the commandment”<sup>f75</sup>; who went to hear the exposition (of the traditions) and visit the head of the captivity:

*and the glory of Christ:* meaning either that the churches were the glory of Christ, in whom he is glorified, where his glory is seen, and his presence enjoyed; or rather the messengers of them, on whom the image of Christ was stamped, who faithfully performed the work of Christ, in all things sought his glory and not their own; and in and by whom his glory was displayed, and held forth to others.

**Ver. 24.** *Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches,* etc..] This is the conclusion of the apostle, upon summing up the characters of these messengers; and his exhortation is, that since they were persons of so much note and worth, as they ought to be received with great marks of respect and affection, so they would take care evidently to make it appear to them who were sent by the churches, and before the churches, or before them who represented the churches; or so as that it might be known by the churches from whence they came, when they returned with their report; or be evident to the churches in Judea, when their liberality should be brought to them:

*the proof of your love;* to Christ and his poor members, how hearty and sincere it was:

*and of our boasting on your behalf;* how willing and forward they were to this good work, and how liberal they would be.